United Nations A/58/166

General Assembly

Distr.: General
21 July 2003

Original: English

Fifty-eighth session
Item 113 of the provisional agenda*
Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Follow-up to and progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report responds to General Assembly resolution 57/182. It reviews steps taken by the Assembly and its Main Committees during its fifty-seventh session to promote the achievement of the goal of gender equality through the gender mainstreaming strategy. Particular focus is placed on actions taken in relation to the follow-up to the United Nations Millennium Declaration and at major events during the past year. An assessment of the work of the Economic and Social Council is also provided. Finally, the catalytic role of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women in support of gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes of the United Nations is addressed.

* A/58/150.

03-43418 (E) 140803

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/182, requested the Secretary-General to report annually to the Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women on follow-up to and progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action[1] and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the Assembly with an assessment of progress made in mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system, including by providing information on key achievements, lessons learned and best practices, and to recommend further measures and strategies for future action within the United Nations system. It also requested the Secretary-General to integrate a gender perspective in his reporting to the Assembly, in order to support gender-sensitive policy formulation.

2. Reports on follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women, focusing on measures taken within the United Nations system to strengthen gender mainstreaming (E/CN.6/2003/2), and to the Economic and Social Council, focusing on providing information on key achievements, lessons learned and best practices, and recommending further measures and strategies for action within the United Nations system (E/2003/69).

II. General Assembly

A. World Summit on Sustainable Development

3. In the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development,[2] participants committed to ensuring that women's empowerment, emancipation and gender equality are integrated in all the activities encompassed within Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The Plan of Implementation[3] recognized that the implementation of the outcomes of the Summit should benefit all, particularly women, youth, children and vulnerable groups. It further acknowledged that gender equality is one of the elements that forms the basis for sustainable development.

4. To achieve the goal of poverty eradication, the Plan of Implementation highlighted, inter alia, the need to promote women's equal access to and full participation in decision-making at all levels, mainstream gender perspectives in all policies and strategies, eliminate all forms of violence and discrimination against women and improve the status, health and economic welfare of women and girls through full and equal access to economic opportunity, land, credit, education and health-care services. It also called for access to agricultural resources for people living in poverty, especially women and indigenous communities, and an increase in decent employment, credit and income for the urban poor, through appropriate national policies promoting equal opportunities for women and men.

5. Regarding measures designed to change unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, the Plan included actions to promote education to provide information for both men and women about available energy sources and

technologies. With respect to promoting and managing the natural resource base for economic and social development, specific attention was drawn to women and gender equality in a number of areas, including: water and sanitation infrastructure and service development; access to public information and participation in support of policy and decision-making related to water resources management and project implementation; rural development, agriculture, nutrition and food security; protection of indigenous resource management systems, rural planning and development; public and private investments that help eliminate inequities facing mountain communities; conserving and using biodiversity in a sustainable way; and minerals, metals and mining development.

6. When addressing health and sustainable development, the Plan of Implementation focused attention on women within the following themes: addressing the causes of ill health, including environmental causes, and the impact on development; ensuring equal access to health-care services, giving particular attention to maternal and emergency obstetric care; promoting healthy living, including reproductive and sexual health; transfer and dissemination of technologies for safe water, sanitation and waste management for rural and urban areas; reduction of HIV/AIDS; reduction of respiratory diseases and other health impacts resulting from air pollution; and provision of affordable energy to rural communities.

7. In reviewing actions aimed at sustainable development, attention was drawn to the promotion of gender equality in the African region when addressing: the right to development; dealing effectively with natural disasters and conflicts, including their humanitarian and environmental impacts; and securing equitable access to land tenure, clarifying resource rights and responsibilities and providing access to credit.

8. In addressing the internationally agreed development goals, steps were called for to avoid any unilateral measure that impedes the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of the affected countries, in particular women and children; eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005 and at all levels of education no later than 2015, through gender mainstreaming and the creation of a gender-sensitive educational system; and encourage further work on indicators for sustainable development by countries at the national level, including integration of gender aspects.

9. The Economic and Social Council was called upon to intensify its efforts to ensure that gender mainstreaming is an integral part of its activities concerning the coordinated implementation of Agenda 21. The Plan of Implementation stated that, at the national level, women should be able to participate fully and equally in policy formulation and decision-making and that a gender perspective should be mainstreamed in all those activities designed to enhance national institutional arrangements for sustainable development, including at the local level.

B. World Summit on the Information Society

10. The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/182, welcomed the convening of the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in Geneva in December 2003 and in Tunis in 2005, and encouraged Governments and all other stakeholders to integrate a gender perspective in the preparatory process and outcome documents.

11. In the agreed conclusions on "Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women",[4] adopted by consensus by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-seventh session on 14 March 2003, a focus on the gender dimensions of information and communication technologies was considered essential for preventing and combating an adverse impact of the digital revolution on gender equality. The Commission stated that media and information and communication technologies could become central tools for women's empowerment and the promotion of gender equality and agreed on a wide range of actions and recommendations to be undertaken by different actors. Those actions were aimed at integrating gender perspectives in national policies, legislation, programmes, projects, strategies and regulatory and technical instruments; creating monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure implementation of gender-sensitive policies and regulations; and analysing the gender impact of such policies. Particular attention was given to making education a priority for the development of information and communication technologies and taking measures to promote girls' education so as to ensure access of women and girls to information and communication technologies. The agreed conclusions further called for establishing or expanding training on the use, design and production of information and communication technologies, including to prepare women and girls to take on leadership roles and for integrating a gender perspective in information and communication technologies training programmes for teachers and media professors. The Commission also discussed women's equal access to information and communication technologies-based economic activities and new employment opportunities in that area and called for strengthening the use of existing communication technologies, such as radio and television, as well as telecommunication and print, in parallel to enhancing the use of new technologies for gender equality. Steps were also proposed to combat information and communication technologies and media-based violence against women including criminal misuse of information and communication technologies.

12. The Commission welcomed the convening of the World Summit on the Information Society and urged all participants to take into account the recommendations contained in the agreed conclusions and to integrate gender perspectives in every facet of the Summit. It further encouraged the high participation of women in the Summit, as well as of significant numbers of gender equality experts and of women information and communication technologies experts as members of national delegations, civil society organizations and the business community. The agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women were transmitted by the Chairperson of the Commission to the President of the Preparatory Committee for the Summit, and by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women to the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union, so that the recommendations could be taken into account in an appropriate manner during the preparations and at the Summit.

C. General Assembly and its Main Committees

13. At its fifty-seventh session, the General Assembly adopted a number of resolutions that included attention to gender equality and/or gender perspectives, which are summarized below. While none of the Assembly's Main Committees

reflected gender perspectives systematically in their outcomes, the First, Second and Third Committees paid the most attention to those issues. The Fifth Committee, in its resolution 57/305, reiterated its request, contained in its resolutions 53/221 and 55/258, including the reaffirmation of the goal of 50/50 gender distribution by 2000 in all categories of posts within the United Nations system, especially at the D-1 level and above. No reference was made to gender perspectives in the work of the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Committees.

1. Resolutions adopted without reference to a Main Committee

14. General Assembly resolution 57/7 on the final review and appraisal of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development encouraged efforts to raise awareness of the New Partnership and to involve all African stakeholders, including women's organizations, in its implementation. It also welcomed the commitment of African countries to promote and enhance the role of African women in all aspects of the implementation.

15. The General Assembly, noting the important contribution of women in the development process, called upon all Member States and the international community to consider contributing to the efforts of the Economic Community of Central African States to, inter alia, strengthen the role of women in the development process (resolution 57/40). Moreover, in its resolution 57/44 on cooperation between the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community, the Assembly, recognizing the important role that women play in the development of the region, appealed to the United Nations, its related bodies and the international community to support the Community's efforts in achieving the internationally agreed development goals, with specific emphasis on the enhancement of the role of women in the development process. It welcomed the establishment by the Community of the Women in Business Network, aimed at empowering women by, inter alia, facilitating and enhancing their access to credit and training in business and technical skills. The Assembly called upon the international community to continue to assist the Angolan authorities, especially by providing humanitarian, financial and material assistance, in alleviating the suffering of the Angolan people, in particular children, women and the elderly.

16. The General Assembly introduced the empowerment of women as one of the priority sectors and called upon the specialized agencies and other organizations and programmes of the United Nations system to increase their cooperation with the League of Arab States and its specialized organizations in that regard (resolution 57/46). It expressed its satisfaction at the exchange with the Organization of American States of information and substantive reports, including reports on the advancement in the status of women, and welcomed the efforts of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to strengthen cooperation with inter-American institutions in various fields, including women and development (resolution 57/157). The Assembly continued to acknowledge the contribution of the Council of Europe to the protection and strengthening of democracy and the rule of law on the European continent, including its activities in the promotion of gender equality (resolution 57/156). However, the resolution on the cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union adopted by the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session (resolution 57/47) does not contain any mention of gender issues as in previous years.

17. With regard to humanitarian and other assistance, the General Assembly adopted a number of resolutions referring to gender equality. It continued to express its grave concern about the deteriorating humanitarian, economic and social situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and about the effect of the continued fighting, especially on women and children (resolution 57/146). Within the context of humanitarian assistance to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Assembly renewed its call upon all relevant actors to continue to provide humanitarian assistance to alleviate the humanitarian needs of the vulnerable refugees and internally displaced persons, bearing in mind the special situation of women (resolution 57/148). As to assistance for humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and development for Timor-Leste, the Assembly welcomed the growing participation of the women of Timor-Leste in all aspects of society and encouraged further efforts to address gender issues, including the need for research, services and appropriate legislation in order to combat domestic violence and other gender-related crimes (resolution 57/105). With regard to Afghanistan, the Assembly remained convinced that gender-sensitive government is one of the elements that can lead to durable peace and reconciliation. It continued to stress the importance of the full and equal participation of women in political, economic, cultural and social life throughout the country and called upon the Transitional Authority to protect and promote the equal rights of men and women. It welcomed the positive steps taken so far towards an improvement in the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of many Afghans, in particular women and children, while noting with grave concern the remaining discriminatory practices that hinder the full enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms (resolution 57/113).

18. When addressing assistance in mine action, the Assembly invited Member States to develop and support national programmes to promote awareness of landmines, including among women and children. It reiterated its dismay at the existing high number of victims of mines, especially among civilian populations, including women and children. It continued to encourage Governments, relevant United Nations bodies and other donors to take further action to promote gender and age-appropriate mine-risk education programmes (resolution 57/159).

19. In its resolution 57/161 on the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala, the General Assembly noted with satisfaction the progress made in the implementation of the peace agreements in some areas, in particular of a law criminalizing discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity and other criteria.

20. In its resolution 57/294 on the 2001-2010 Decade to roll back malaria in developing countries, particularly in Africa, the General Assembly took note of the real progress towards the implementation of plans to combat malaria, including most notably the growing use of preventive treatment of pregnant women and prompt access to treatment with effective drugs. It called for joint comprehensive efforts between Africa and the international community to ensure that by 2005 at least 60 per cent of those at risk for malaria, in particular pregnant women and children under 5 years of age, benefit from protective measures.

2. First Committee: disarmament and international security issues

21. In the context of regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, the General Assembly noted with satisfaction the holding of a Subregional

Conference on the Protection of Women and Children in Armed Conflict in Central Africa at Kinshasa in November 2001 (resolution 57/88).

22. The Assembly also adopted a resolution on United Nations disarmament fellowship, training and advisory services, recognizing the need for Member States to take gender equality into account when nominating candidates to the programme (resolution 57/93).

3. Second Committee: economic and financial issues

23. Recalling its endorsement of the outcomes of the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the General Assembly addressed the role of the United Nations in promoting development in the context of globalization and interdependence and underlined that it is essential to invest in gender-sensitive basic economic and social infrastructure, social services and social protection. It emphasized the critical need to reinforce national efforts in capacity-building in developing countries and countries with economies in transition in such areas as gender budget policies (resolution 57/274). The Assembly also addressed the issue of culture and development and recognized that tolerance and respect for diversity effectively promote and are supported by, inter alia, the empowerment of women (resolution 57/249).

24. In the implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, the Assembly continued to express its deep concern that the number of people living in extreme poverty in many countries continues to increase, with women and children constituting the majority and the most affected group, in particular in the least developed countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The Assembly reaffirmed that good governance at the national level is essential for poverty eradication and sustainable development and that freedom, peace and security, domestic stability, respect for human rights, including gender equality, are also essential and mutually reinforcing. It also reaffirmed that the eradication of poverty should be addressed in an integrated way, taking into account the need for the empowerment of women and stressed the importance of increasing access to and control over resources, including land, skills, knowledge, capital and social connections, for the poor, in particular women (resolution 57/266). When addressing industrial development cooperation, the Assembly reiterated that industrialization is a key element in the promotion of sustainable development and in the creation of productive employment, value-added income generation and, thus, the eradication of poverty, as well as in the facilitation of social integration, including the integration of women into the development process (resolution 57/243).

25. In the context of the international financial system and development, the Assembly stressed that the advice of multilateral financial institutions should take into account social costs of adjustment programmes, which should be designed to minimize negative impacts on the vulnerable segments of society, and underscored the importance in this regard of gender-sensitive employment and poverty eradication policies and strategies (resolution 57/241). With regard to commodities, the Assembly recognized that enhancing the role of women at all levels and in all aspects of rural development, agriculture, nutrition and food security is imperative. It further strongly emphasized the need for actions at both the national and

international levels, inter alia, to improve market access conditions, address supply-side constraints and provide support for capacity-building, including in areas that actively involve women (resolution 57/236).

4. Third Committee: social, humanitarian and cultural issues

26. Two items of the Third Committee — "Advancement of women" and "Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women" — are specifically devoted to gender equality. In its resolution on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, the Assembly welcomed the increased attention to the situation of women and girls and the integration of a gender perspective in the work of the United Nations. It called upon Governments and all other relevant actors to continue to integrate a gender perspective in the implementation of and follow-up to recent United Nations conferences, summits and special sessions and in future reports on the subject. It welcomed the convening of the World Summit on the Information Society and encouraged Governments and all other stakeholders to integrate a gender perspective in the preparatory processes and outcome documents. The Assembly also acknowledged that the creation of an enabling environment, including through the full participation of women at all levels of decision-making, is necessary to ensure the full participation of women in economic activities and called upon States to remove obstacles to the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session.

27. The Assembly welcomed the inclusion of the issue of gender mainstreaming in the agenda of the Economic and Social Council, the consideration of annual progress made in gender mainstreaming and the attention given to gender perspectives in the outcomes of the 2002 substantive session of the Council. It requested the Secretary-General to include in his annual and quinquennial reports on the follow-up to the United Nations Millennium Declaration an assessment of the progress made in promoting the goal of gender equality, in particular in relation to the development goals set forth in the Millennium Declaration, and recommendations to improve the measurements and coverage of indicators so that progress towards gender equality can be evaluated over time (resolution 57/182).

28. In its resolution on the effective implementation of international instruments on human rights, including reporting obligations (resolution 57/202), the Assembly encouraged the efforts of the human rights treaty bodies to monitor more effectively the human rights of women, bearing in mind the workshops on gender integration, and reaffirmed the responsibility of all treaty bodies to integrate a gender perspective into their work. The Assembly also expressed its concern regarding the considerable number of communications received by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights defenders that indicate the serious nature of the risks faced by human rights defenders and the particular consequences for women human rights defenders (resolution 57/209).

29. With regard to regional arrangements for the promotion and protection of human rights, the Assembly noted with appreciation the Constitutive Act of the African Union, in particular article 4, in which it is stated that the Union shall function in accordance with several principles, inter alia, the promotion of gender equality (resolution 57/210). The Assembly adopted its resolution on assistance to

refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa, considering that women and children are the majority of the population affected by conflict and bear the brunt of atrocities and other consequences of conflict (resolution 57/183).

30. When addressing the issue of violence against women, the Assembly welcomed specific legal and comprehensive legislative measures being enacted or contemplated, in particular with regard to various forms of violence against women and girls, and welcomed the launching of various initiatives, strategies and action plans aimed at enhancement of the economic capacity of women and the monitoring of the various forms of violence against women (resolution 57/181). The Assembly also stressed the need to treat all forms of violence against women and girls, including crimes committed in the name of honour, as a criminal offence, punishable by law and underlined the importance of the empowerment of women and their effective participation in decision-making and policy-making processes as one of the critical tools to prevent and eliminate those types of crimes. It called upon all States to investigate, prosecute and document cases of crimes against women committed in the name of honour and punish the perpetrators, and to intensify efforts to raise awareness of the need to prevent and eliminate those crimes with the aim of changing the attitudes and behaviour that allow such crimes to be committed by involving, inter alia, community leaders. The Assembly underlined the need to strengthen the capacity of those responsible for enforcing the law to respond to complaints of such crimes and take necessary measures to ensure the protection of actual and potential victims. It called upon States to include, if within their reporting obligations, information on legal and policy measures adopted and implemented to prevent and eliminate crimes against women committed in the name of honour, where appropriate, in their reports to the human rights treaty bodies (resolution 57/179). In its resolution on strengthening the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme, in particular its technical cooperation capacity, the Assembly continued to note the desirability of closer coordination and cooperation among States in combating crime, including the smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons, especially women and children (resolution 57/173).

31. When addressing the issue of human rights and extreme poverty, the Assembly, recalling its resolution 56/207, expressed its deep concern that the number of people living in extreme poverty continued to increase, with women and children constituting the majority and the most affected group (resolution 57/211).

32. The Assembly continued to raise gender perspectives in its resolutions on human rights education (resolution 57/206), the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (resolution 57/212) and the United Nations Literacy Decade (resolution 57/166).

33. When addressing the right to development, the Assembly recognized the important role and the rights of women and the application of a gender perspective as a cross-cutting issue in the process of realizing the right to development and noted the positive relationship between women's education and their equal participation in the activities of the community and the promotion of the right to development (resolution 57/223).

34. The Assembly called upon all States that have signed, ratified or acceded to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment to sign and ratify or accede to the Optional Protocol. In the Optional Protocol, adopted by the Assembly in December 2002, the Assembly agreed that in

the composition of the Subcommittee on Prevention, consideration shall be given to balanced gender representation on the basis of the principles of equality and non-discrimination, and requested the States parties to strive for gender balance among the experts of the national preventive mechanisms (resolution 57/199). In addition to inviting States parties to the Convention to incorporate a gender perspective when submitting reports to the Committee against Torture, and the Special Rapporteur to continue to examine questions of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment directed against women, the Assembly urged Governments to take effective measures to provide redress and to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including their gender-based manifestations (resolution 57/200). The Assembly adopted a resolution on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, in which it recalled that the Commission on Human Rights had requested the Special Rapporteur to apply a gender perspective in her work (resolution 57/214).

35. In addressing trafficking in women and girls, the Assembly, recognizing the importance of bilateral, subregional and regional cooperation mechanisms and initiatives to address the problem of trafficking in women and children, in particular girls, welcomed the decision of the Commission on the Status of Women to consider at its forty-seventh session the priority theme "Women's human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls". It urged Governments to draw up, as appropriate, national action plans and programmes to improve the protection of trafficked women and girls and called upon them to ensure that the treatment of victims of trafficking, especially women and girls, as well as all measures taken against trafficking in persons, are applied with full respect for the human rights of those victims. It encouraged Governments and relevant United Nations bodies, within existing resources, to raise public awareness of the issue of trafficking, particularly in women and girls and to emphasize that trafficking is a crime, in order to reduce the demand for trafficked women and children. It also encouraged Governments to undertake campaigns aimed at clarifying opportunities, limitations and rights in the event of migration so as to enable women to make informed decisions and to prevent them from becoming victims of trafficking. The Assembly invited the business sector, in particular the tourism and telecommunications industries, to cooperate with Governments in eliminating trafficking in women and children, in particular girls. It requested the Secretary-General to include in his report to the Assembly at its fifty-ninth session proposals for a future international/United Nations year against trafficking in persons, especially women and girls, with a view to protecting their dignity and human rights (resolution 57/176). The Assembly adopted a resolution on protection of migrants, in which it reiterated the need for all States parties to protect fully the universally recognized human rights of migrants, especially women and children (resolution 57/218).

36. The Assembly continued to stress, in the resolutions adopted on the rights of the child, the need for mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes relating to children (resolution 57/190). It expressed grave concern that, in some countries, the situation of children is adversely affected by unilateral coercive measures that hinder the well-being of the population, with particular consequences for women and children (resolution 57/222). The resolution on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women recognized that the equal enjoyment by women of all human rights will promote the

realization of the rights of the child, bearing in mind the special needs of girls (resolution 57/178).

37. The Assembly was convinced that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance reveal themselves in a differentiated manner for women and girls and can be among the factors leading to a deterioration in their living conditions, poverty, violence, multiple forms of discrimination and limitation or denial of their human rights (resolution 57/189). It also recognized the need to integrate a gender perspective into relevant policies, strategies and programmes of action against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in order to address multiple forms of discrimination (resolution 57/195). The Assembly emphasized that tolerance and respect for diversity facilitate the universal promotion and protection of human rights, including gender equality and the enjoyment of all human rights by all (resolution 57/204). The Assembly, after taking note of the reports of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, encouraged States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination to continue to include a gender perspective in their reports to the Committee and invited the Committee to take into account a gender perspective in the implementation of its mandate (resolution 57/194). The Assembly also adopted a resolution on elimination of all forms of religious intolerance and continued to urge States to devote particular attention to all practices motivated by religion or belief that lead to violations of the human rights of women and to discrimination against women (resolution 57/208).

38. The General Assembly continued to address the situation of older women in society, reaffirming that the Political Declaration and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, provided a broad spectrum of social, political and economic recommendations to improve the conditions of older women. It recognized that older women outnumber older men and that the situation of older women must be a priority for policy action and called upon Governments and the United Nations system to ensure that the needs, perspectives and experiences of older women are reflected in all development policies and programmes (resolution 57/177).

39. The Assembly continued to raise gender perspectives in the resolutions adopted on international cooperation against the world drug problem (resolution 57/174), the right to food (resolution 57/226) and promotion of a democratic and equitable international order (resolution 57/213).

40. The Assembly addressed the particular situation of women in many of its country-specific resolutions. It expressed deep concern at the violation of the rights of women, the harassment of women by security forces and the serious human rights abuses in the Sudan and called upon the Government of the Sudan to continue and to reinforce its efforts to prevent and stop the abduction of women and children, and upon the international community to expand its support for activities aimed at improving respect for human rights and humanitarian law, in particular those of the Committee for the Eradication of Abduction of Women and Children (resolution 57/230). With regard to the situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Assembly condemned the widespread use of sexual violence against women and children, including as a means of warfare and urged all parties to the conflict to implement all necessary measures to put an end to the widespread

violations of human rights and to impunity, in particular with regard to the sexual violence against women and children (resolution 57/233).

41. When addressing the question of human rights in Afghanistan, the Assembly invited the relevant bodies of the United Nations, in particular the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, to develop a human rights-based strategy addressing, inter alia, women's rights. It commended the steps taken by the Transitional Authority to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms in order to guarantee the rights of women, welcomed the establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and encouraged the Transitional Authority to provide the necessary support and resources to enable the Ministry to function effectively. It also expressed grave concern about recent attacks against women and girls, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, forced marriage, detention of women and girls for violating social codes and attacks on girls' schools (resolution 57/234).

42. The Assembly continued to stress the need for gender perspectives in connection with the situation of human rights in Myanmar (resolution 57/231) and in Iraq (resolution 57/232) and noted with serious concern the prison conditions in Cambodia and called upon the Government of Cambodia to take further measures to improve the conditions of detention, to provide proper food and health care to prisoners and detainees and to meet the special needs of women and children (resolution 57/225).

III. Economic and Social Council

43. The work of the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 2002 on the follow-up to and progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly was covered in the report of the Secretary-General to the Council (E/2003/69). The Council considered for the first time its new regular sub-item on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system. A panel discussion held on 11 June 2002, with the participation of the Chairpersons/Vice-Chairpersons of the Commission on Science and Technology, the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs as well as senior officials of the Secretariat, identified progress made, good practices, gaps and challenges in reflecting gender perspectives in sectoral areas.

44. In its resolution on that issue (resolution 2002/23), the Council expressed its appreciation to its subsidiary bodies for the progress made in giving attention to situations specific to women and to the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into their work, for example by identifying gender equality as an essential element for the realization of social, people-centred and sustainable development and emphasizing the link between human rights and gender equality. It called upon its subsidiary bodies to intensify their efforts to mainstream gender perspectives in their work and to continue their efforts to address gender perspectives in relation to the thematic issues of their multi-year programmes of work or in relation to annual themes. The Council invited its Bureau to consider, during meetings with the bureaux of its subsidiary bodies, progress made and obstacles encountered in gender mainstreaming. It also underlined the importance of presenting issues and

approaches in reports to intergovernmental bodies in a gender-sensitive manner to support gender-sensitive policy formulation. It encouraged the collection, provision and use by the United Nations system and its subsidiary bodies of data disaggregated by sex and other gender-specific information, as one of the means by which obstacles to the integration of a gender perspective can be monitored and addressed. It underlined the catalytic role played by the Commission on the Status of Women, in promoting gender mainstreaming.

45. In response to the Council's invitation to contribute input to its high-level segment, the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women submitted a conference room paper entitled "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for eradication of poverty and sustainable development" that provided an overview of actions contained in the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome document on the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women, aimed at improving the situation of women in rural areas.

IV. Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women of the Secretariat

46. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women has continued to promote, facilitate and monitor gender mainstreaming throughout the United Nations system and intergovernmental processes. At the Secretariat level, the Special Adviser has focused on advocacy, providing briefings and advice to senior management to promote a greater understanding of gender mainstreaming, developing methodologies and tools on different sectors and issues, developing competencies and sharing best practices on gender mainstreaming.

47. The Office and the Division for the Advancement of Women supported the Department for Disarmament Affairs in developing a Gender Action Plan to mainstream gender perspectives into disarmament activities. The gender mainstreaming process in the Department for Disarmament Affairs covers all aspects of its work, including weapons of mass destruction, small arms and light weapons, landmines and disarmament and development. The Action Plan builds on earlier collaboration between the Department and the Office of the Special Adviser in developing briefing notes entitled "Gender Perspectives on Disarmament".

48. The Office of the Special Adviser continued to collaborate with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, which prepared a strategic framework to mainstream gender perspectives in its work at Headquarters and in the field. A range of instructions on the behaviour of peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel in armed conflict areas and regulations to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace were developed. A total of five directives on procedures to handle disciplinary issues, allegations of serious misconduct and the behaviour of uniformed services (military and civilian police) were finalized. The Office of the Special Adviser works closely with the Civilian Police Adviser on recruitment and retention of women civilian police, including through a joint note verbale to police-contributing countries requesting more female officers. The Office supported the United Nations Mine Action Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to ensure that gender dimensions are included in the revised 2001-2005 strategy of the Service in

developing tools to integrate gender concerns into the five pillars of mine action. In the absence of a dedicated post of Gender Adviser in the Department, the Office of the Special Adviser provided support and advice to Gender Advisers in peace support missions. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs have deployed Gender Advisers to the four major peacekeeping operations — namely, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Timor-Leste, Kosovo and Sierra Leone.

49. At the inter-agency level, the Special Adviser plays a catalytic role in mainstreaming gender concerns in the work of inter-agency forums, such as Executive Committees on Peace and Security, Humanitarian Affairs and Economic and Social Affairs. In the humanitarian field, the United Nations humanitarian community integrates gender perspectives in the development and implementation of humanitarian assistance activities through an action plan, thus building on the work already done by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

50. In supporting the implementation of gender mainstreaming throughout the United Nations system, the work of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, chaired by the Special Adviser, plays an increasingly important role. The Inter-Agency Network met in New York from 24 to 27 February 2003. The Network discussed emerging trends and challenges in the promotion of gender equality and ways and means to enhance integrated approaches through inter-agency cooperation. It emphasized the importance of integrated rather than sectoral approaches, for example in the areas of poverty and employment, access and use of information and communication technology, violence against women and the role of men, or in humanitarian crises where the issues of HIV/AIDS, drought and famine intersect.

51. Throughout the year, the Network worked through Task Forces on gender mainstreaming in programme budgets, gender and financing for development, integration of gender into the World Summit on the Information Society process, a gender analysis of the Common Country Assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, maintenance and expansion of WomenWatch and the development of gender indicators by the regional commissions. At its last session, the Network established new Task Forces on gender perspectives in the Millennium Development Goals, trade, and water, respectively. The Network also held a one-day workshop on incorporating gender perspectives into the preparation of and follow-up to global conferences.

52. In order to ensure high-level support and inter-agency coordination on gender mainstreaming, the Network maintains regular contact with the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the High-level Committee on Management and the High-level Committee on Programmes. A number of issues highlighted during the session were brought to the attention of the High-level Committees through the Chairperson, such as the importance of linking gender equality to all Millennium Development Goals, integration of gender perspectives into the follow-up to major world conferences and the forthcoming World Summit on the Information Society, increased efforts to integrate gender perspectives in national and regional planning processes and full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security by all relevant actors.

53. At the Athens Forum on "Gender, Peace and Foreign Policy: The European Union Perspective", held in Athens from 28 to 30 May 2003, in the context of

Greece's Presidency of the European Union, the Special Adviser called on Member States to ensure, in a systematic manner, that women in post-conflict situations are fully empowered economically and to broaden the concept of assistance given by bilateral donors to a single seamless process in which women are equal partners with men in every area. At the meeting of the Committee on Women in the NATO Forces, "The Significance and Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security, Particularly in Military Contexts", held in Ottawa on 3 June 2003, the Special Adviser underlined that the synergy between the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and regional organizations, with their comparative advantages, offers new prospects for peacekeeping and peacemaking in the twenty-first century.

54. In the area of women, peace and security, major efforts, in cooperation with Governments, United Nations entities and civil society, have been made to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). In the run-up to the second anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), a meeting of the Security Council was held on 25 July 2002. The Special Adviser, addressing the Council, emphasized that sustainable peace and lasting security could not be achieved without women's empowerment and full involvement. The momentum created by the resolution was further amplified by preparations for the second anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) in October 2002, particularly by the report of the Secretary-General on women, peace and security (S/2002/1154) and the Secretary-General's study on women, peace and security, prepared by the Office of the Special Adviser in cooperation with the Inter-Agency Task Force on Women, Peace and Security, which the Special Adviser chairs.

55. The study on women, peace and security gives a systematic overview of gender-related activities carried out by the United Nations system in peace-building, humanitarian assistance and reconstruction. It highlights the impact of armed conflict on women and girls at every stage of conflict as well as the pervasive violence against women and girls during armed conflict that often persists as domestic violence and trafficking when conflict subsides. It highlighted the expanded role of women during conflict and the obstacles they face in contributing to a sustainable peace process. It sets out the gender perspectives at every phase of conflict and its resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. Based on the findings of the study, the Secretary-General presented his aforementioned report on women, peace and security at an open meeting of the Council on 28 October 2002. He highlighted a 21-point programme for Security Council action for ensuring the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), such as participation of women in negotiations of peace agreements at the national and international levels. The debate in the Security Council resulted in the adoption of a Presidential Statement on behalf of the Security Council (S/PRST/2002/32).

56. Coordinated by the Office of the Special Adviser, a system-wide implementation action plan on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) was developed by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Women, Peace and Security. The plan outlines the efforts being made by the United Nations system to monitor the implementation of the resolution. It covers all areas pertaining to mandates of United Nations entities identified in the resolution, including gender mainstreaming, training, humanitarian assistance, post-conflict cooperation and development, disarmament, gender-sensitive training, protection of women and girls in armed conflict, human rights, the girl child, constitutional and political aspects

and reproductive health. Under the action plan, the Office of the Special Adviser reviewed all Security Council resolutions, reports of the Secretary-General and Security Council mission reports from 2000 to present, a total of over 450 documents, for their gender content. The review revealed that very few of those documents reflect gender or women's specific concerns. The Office worked with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in preparing a roster of gender specialists. It also compiled a database on women's groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in conflict zones. In cooperation with other members of the Inter-Agency Task Force, the Office coordinated the preparation of briefs for Security Council missions, e.g. to West Africa and the Great Lakes.

57. The Special Adviser continued to play a key role in advocacy and gender mainstreaming efforts to ensure attention to the situation of women in Afghanistan and Iraq. She works closely with other United Nations agencies and with the Afghan Ministry of Women Affairs and Afghan NGOs to enhance the incorporation of gender perspectives in recovery and development programmes in Afghanistan, including in the National Constitution and election processes. Specific advocacy and gender mainstreaming-related activities included a series of meetings and panels with high-level officials on the situation of women in Afghanistan and a joint workshop on "Gender and Post-conflict Reconstruction: Lessons Learned from Afghanistan" by the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee Network on Gender Equality, held in Paris on 10 and 11 July 2003. In 2002, a staff member of the Division for the Advancement of Women was detailed to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan to act as interim Gender Adviser to the Special Representative. In the preparation for the Technical Consultation on Reconstruction Needs for Iraq, held on 24 and 25 June 2003, the Office of the Special Adviser worked with the Inter-Agency Task Force on Women, Peace and Security to ensure that gender concerns were raised in the technical sectoral meetings in such areas as social sector, infrastructure, livelihood and public administration.

58. Continued efforts have been made to ensure that gender perspectives were identified and integrated in the preparation for, and outcomes of, global conferences and summits. The Office of the Special Adviser and the Division for the Advancement of Women contributed to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2002 and to the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on the Information Society.

59. Jointly with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Division for the Advancement of Women published a handbook for parliamentarians on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol. The Special Adviser co-launched the handbook with the Secretary-General of IPU in April 2003 during the IPU Conference in Santiago, Chile.

V. Recommendations

60. **The following recommendations are presented to the General Assembly for its consideration.**

61. **The General Assembly may wish to call for continuing efforts to include attention to gender equality in reports submitted to the Assembly and its subsidiary bodies to enhance the analysis of gender perspectives and to further integrate gender perspectives in its resolutions.**

62. **The General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies may wish to take further steps to provide greater attention to the follow-up and implementation of the resolutions and decisions addressing gender equality and the empowerment of women. In so doing, it may wish to encourage further reporting on the extent to which progress has been achieved and identify areas requiring further attention.**

63. **The General Assembly may wish to take specific steps to ensure that gender perspectives are an integral part of all aspects of the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration and to call for further attention to gender perspectives in the follow-up to and reporting on the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. It may also wish to encourage further systematic attention to gender perspectives in the preparatory process for and outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society.**

Notes

[1] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[2] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[3] Ibid., resolution 2, annex.

[4] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2003, Supplement No. 7* (E/2003/27), chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution III.